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REVIEWS AND NOTES.

An Introduction to Statistical Methods. By Horace Secrist, Ph.D. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1917. Pp. VIII, 482.

Into a field that has been demanding adequate treatment for some time, the entry of Professor Secrist's book is most welcome. The author emphasizes the study of statistics as a method and a means, rather than an end in itself, and addresses himself to three classes of readers: college students, statisticians, and business executives. As a manual for statisticians, the volume carries much valuable information and is most suggestive; the reviewer is inclined to question, however, whether the book will at all points be clear to the other two classes.

The author displays wide reading, and handles his material with skill. He is particularly to be commended for devoting his main attention rather to business or economic statistics than to vital statistics, which, although an important branch of statistics, is becoming of lesser interest to general students of statistical method. For example, the discussion of the lack of coördination in much of the statistical effort of today (pp. 33-37), and of the nature of statistical units (pp. 59-63), shows commendable familiarity with and emphasis upon the growing field of economic statistics.

On the other hand, is it wise to fill a book—even one dealing with method—with so much detail as to the statistical activity of governmental bureaus? I refer to the description of existing wage statistics and their tabulation (pp. 94-104). Again, condensation would have improved such other sections as the detailed discussion of American index numbers (Chap. X, in part) the discussion of methods of ascertaining the arithmetic mean, and some of the longer tables on correlation, such as Tables E and F.

The first three chapters are admirable for the statistical beginner. They deal with the meaning and application of statistics, with the collection of data, and with units of measurement. Chapters V, VI, and VII, dealing with tabular and graphic presentation, are also helpful. Chapter IV is an illustrative section on statistical method, using the subject of wages as typical. The discussions of averages and index numbers, Chapters VIII and IX, introduce some material that is over the heads of the average student or business man, the same being true in larger measure of the remaining chapters, especially the discussion of dispersion and skewness and of correlation.

Furthermore, doubt may be expressed whether some of the definitions and discussions are sufficiently clear for the beginner in statistics. Take, for instance, the discussion of how to smooth a curve or graph (pp. 229-231), and the brief reference to interpolation (p. 270). These are matters clear enough to the practicing or professional statistician; it is questionable, however, whether a representative college student or business man would

gain a clear conception of them from the discussion. This seems all the more unfortunate, as the general arrangement of the volume is excellent, the chapters are carefully arranged and well annotated, and there is a consistent effort throughout to state the problems as introduced and to summarize the conclusions of each chapter.

Again, the distinction between *diagrammatic* and *graphic* presentation (Chaps. VI and VII) seems loosely drawn for the beginner. In fact, there is no direct definition of either method of presentation. The nearest approaches to a definition of diagrammatic presentation are the two statements that "diagrams are generally illustrations of conclusions from analysis" (p. 159), and that they represent an effort "to introduce devices for showing the proportional relations between facts, and to emphasize the concepts of space and movement" (p. 162). Graphic presentation is stated to deal "with graphs or curves of various types which show the distribution of data at a given time or the sequence of data over a period of time" (p. 193). The graphic method is further described as more inclusive than the diagrammatic, because graphs "may be used advantageously in connection with averages and other summary expressions" (p. 158), and because they emphasize continuity and relation more strikingly than diagrams in that they are uninterrupted (p. 193). Is it meticulous to suggest that these distinctions as stated may leave the beginner in a state of mental confusion?

A few omissions and inconsistencies may be noted. In treating of the utilization of statistics within business units (p. 11) there is no reference to an income account or a balance sheet—a rather curious omission of perhaps the most significant of all corporate statistics. They are accounting statistics, it is true, yet they also represent a high level of statistical method. In the discussion of mechanical systems of tabulation on page 127, a typographical error misspells the name "Hollerith." The author discusses the wage statistics of the Interstate Commerce Commission (pp. 94-95), but overlooks the latest developments, made effective July 1, 1914, by which railway employees are now classified in 68 groups, while their compensation is reduced to an hourly rather than a daily basis. Reference to the Commission's statistical report for 1915 would have obviated this oversight.

However, these are insignificant slips of the pen in a work that displays sound scholarship and wide application of existing material. The book contains much of value for the student, if he knows how to skip details; much good reference material for the statistician; much food for thought for anyone interested in current methods of statistical tabulation and presentation. It is a distinct contribution and may especially be commended to readers of these QUARTERLY PUBLICATIONS.

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